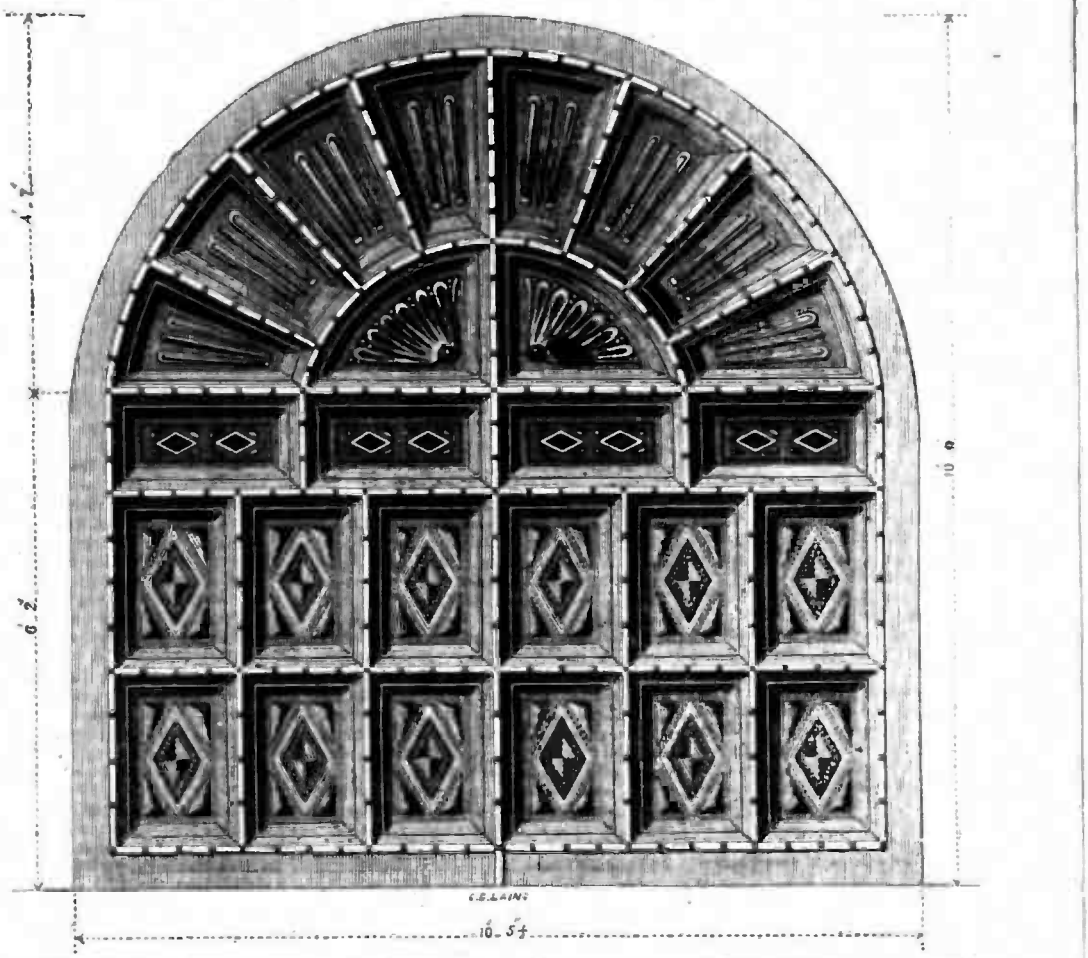
OAK DOOR, FROM THE ORACLE, AT READING.



chased land, and erected the structure, now known as "The Oracle," which has been referred to by our correspondent.

The origin of the name is doubtful. Coates, one of the historians of Reading, says it did not appertain to the buildings previously on the site, but was given to the edifice erected by the corporation under Kendrick's will, and might have had "its origin from the handsome entrance or portico, in Minster-street; such an entrance or portico being frequently termed an oriel, an appellation which might easily be corrupted to Oracle." Another writer, Mr. Man, doubts the truth of this derivation, and considers it had its name from the principal ingredient used in dyeing, "a drug originally brought from the Canary Islands, called Orchal, but imported into this country from Italy, where it was called *Oricello*, in Latin *Oricoia*;" from either of which I presume the Oracle might derive its present name." Large quantities were stored up in some part of the establishment, which might be called the Orchal House, and from the frequent use made of the term, be afterwards applied to the whole of the building.

We are inclined to agree with the latter. In the middle ages the term Oriel (Oryole and Oryall) was applied differently from what it is now. Mr. Hamper shews six applications of it (*Archæologia*, Vol. XXIII.) namely, 1, to a penthouse; 2, a porch attached to any edifice; 3, a gatehouse; 4, an upper story; 5, a loft; and 6, a minstrels' gallery. The first of these (a penthouse, or covered way) he thinks the original application of the term, and conjectures that it may have been derived from the Saxon,—*over-hele* (*o'er-hele*) being an established English word, signifying to cover over.*

At the date of the erection of the building in question, however, the word oriel appears to have been applied solely, as now, to a large bay, or projecting window, and would certainly not have been applied to such a gateway as that at the Oracle.

The condition of this gateway is disgraceful to the corporation; it is to be hoped the funds appertaining to the charity are better looked after than the buildings are.

Some remains of Tudor work may be observed in parts of the establishment, serving to shew either that the buildings on the ground, when the corporation bought it, were not wholly destroyed, or that portions were worked in. One apartment, at a short distance from the gateway, now used for the infant school, has a handsome stone chimney-piece of Tudor character, with carved paterae in the cornice, and a strawberry-leaf termination. The room is otherwise fitted up with handsome wood-work of about the same date as the gates here given.

Respecting these we may remark, that they closely resemble the pair of gates in the façade of Northumberland House, Strand.

Students who possess the whole of our journal, will find advantage in comparing the various examples of parts of buildings which appear from time to time in our pages, and tracing the alterations which were made at different dates. In addition to what we may consider the beauty or interest of particular examples, we are influenced in our selection by a desire to furnish those who preserve THE BUILDER, with a useful series, illustrative of architectural history and progress.

* Hatt, to cover a building with tiles, or other materials. Piers Plowman notices the cloister of a convent as "*hyled* with lede."—*Britton's Architectural Dictionary.*

YORK CATHEDRAL.—We are told that Mr. Hudson, as Lord Mayor of York, has proposed a scheme for throwing open the west end of this noble cathedral, to be accomplished by public subscription, and heads the list himself with 500*l.*

RAFFAELLE'S APPOINTMENT AS ARCHITECT OF ST. PETER'S, AT ROME.

THE following is a translation of the (Latin) brief of Leo X., by which Raffaelle was appointed architect of the Roman cathedral.*

TO RAFFAELLE URBINATE.

As, besides the art of painting, in which you are known to excel all men—the architect *Bramante* has thought you of a similar qualification in the art of construction; so much so, that on his death-bed he has declared, that to you the building of the Roman temple of the Prince of the Apostles, by him begun, could be entirely intrusted; and as you have proved to us, by the model of the work, and all other explanation demanded of you, given in a learned and abundant manner;—We, to whom nothing is a more ancient care, than that this sanctuary should be as well most magnificently, as most quickly constructed; We make you the master of this work, with the stipend of three hundred gold coins, which shall be provided for you by the managers of those sums, which are yearly assessed, and reported to *us* for the construction of this sanctuary; and I command them to pay to you this salary in equal portions, in time due, if you request so, even without delay, by the single month. You, however, we exhort, that you may undertake the care of this office in the manner, that you will pay due attention in its execution, as well for your own consideration and name—of which, moreover, you have to lay a good foundation in your youthful years—as of our hopes and fatherly benevolence to you; as the dignity and celebrity of the sanctuary itself, which throughout the world has been always considered the largest and most holy—and of the piety which is due from us (all) to the very Prince of Apostles.

Given on the Cal. of Aug. Year Two. Rome.

* Pet. Bembo, Epistol. Leonis X., P. M. Lugduni, 1538, 8vo., p. 193.

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